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New York, July 31, 1909

TO THE SAINTS OF THE
EASTERN STATES MISSION,

Dear Brethren & Sisters:

This is the first opportunity I have had, since assuming the Presidency of this Mission, to address a general letter to the Saints, many of whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting. I know the faith that is required for an individual to embrace an unpopular faith, and I know the integrity that is needful for one to remain faithful to such a faith; but best of all, I have a divine knowledge of the blessings in store for those who remain faithful unto the end. There is no question as to the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I bear witness to you that God, in His mercy, has revealed Himself to His children in the age in which we now live. We read about the trials and tribulations that surrounded the saints of God when Christ and His former Apostles ministered in the flesh. We know how the followers of Christ were looked down upon by those who belonged to the different synagogues in which the saints formerly worshiped before they obeyed the truth. We read of the faithfulness of the saints and admire their integrity in remaining faithful though surrounded by all trials, and even facing death itself. The saints in this dispensation must make up their minds to be tried also, to the very uttermost, if need be, in order to gain the reward they are living for, in that place prepared by the Master for those who love Him. Members of many churches to-day are meting out to the saints of God the same treatment which was meted out to the saints formerly. The same cause will always produce the same effect and this should be a testimony to all members of the church that Joseph Smith did receive from the Father the revelations of His mind and will when the church was organized. People who look down upon you for your faithfulness to the Gospel are actuated, perhaps unknowingly, by the same spirit which rested upon members of other churches anciently, who pittied, and sometimes persecuted those whom they thought were simply deluded in following that man of Nazareth. So in this day they look back at the history of their own kind, and condemn the saints of God. They do the same thing and yet, with words of apparent earnestness, they say, "if we had lived in the days of the Lord we would not have done as they did." Yet they are doing the same and it is because the Adversary, working upon the minds of the children of God in our dispensation, make them believe that it is right and proper to believe in dead prophets, but not right and proper to believe that living prophets will come to them. This has been the condemnation of all generations and if the saints will take the sermon delivered by our Beloved Redeemer, as recorded in the 22nd chapter of Matthew, they will see that the same cause always produces the same effect. This sermon, delivered by the Redeemer, should be read and re-read by every member of the Church, and the sermon of the Savior upon the Mount, as recorded in the 6th, 7th, and 8th chapters of Matthew, should be studied and re studied by the saints who desire to do the will of our Father in Heaven. It is equally important that the children of the Church should make themselves acquainted with the history of the Prophet Joseph. Read his own story of the visit of the Father and the Son to him, of the restoration of the priesthood, of the delivering

of the sacred records to him, which he gave to the world as the ancient history of one half of this planet. The saints can obtain this by supplying themselves with a copy of the Pearl of Great Price, and they can have it in pamphlet form from the Mission office, and it should be read and understood by all members of the Church.

The saints should understand also that the law is, that he who is warned should warn his neighbor, and therefore they should be supplied with books and pamphlets bearing upon the principles of the Gospel that they can loan their friends to read, and thereby become missionaries in carrying the glad tidings of great joy to those who now live without a knowledge of the same. The saints should understand their duties towards the Church and should ever keep in mind the importance of doing their duty. The elders who are called to labor are bearing their own expenses through the kindness of their loved ones at home, and the saints should carefully read that portion of the scriptures to be found in the 25th chapter of Matthew where it teaches the lesson that the one who feeds a servant of God or who gives them a place to rest, will receive the same reward as though they entertained the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Read this portion of the scriptures, and remember that though the heavens and the earth pass away not one jot or tittle of the promises of Christ will fall to the ground unfulfilled.

Remember, brethren and sisters, that among many of the other principles of the Gospel, which have been restored, the law of tithing has been given with the rest. By reading Malachi 4, chap. 8-11 verses, you will see that the Lord throws down the challenge to us and tells us to try Him and see if He will not pour out blessings upon us for the observance of this law.

Remember the first Sabath of each month. It has been set apart as a day of fasting and prayer. Consecrate the price of the food you would naturally consume upon that day, for the benefit of the poor. Bring yourselves, once each month, to suffer the pangs of hunger and you will then realize the condition of the poor whose unfortunate condition compels them to suffer the pangs of hunger many days each month. Abstaining from food for one day out of each month will give you better health and will do you good in many ways, and then it will bring down the blessings of God also upon your heads.

I realize the many trials we have to pass through while scattered among the people of the world and yet the "little stone" cut out of the mountain without hands is already fast becoming a great mountain and it will soon fill the whole world with the righteousness of God. Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a mustard seed, the smallest of them all, which became a tree in the Holy Land, upon whose branches the birds of the air could find a resting place In this connection I would like to give you a few facts taken from a report made by Joseph F. Smith, Jr., one of the Assistant Historians of the Church, for the year ending December 31, 1908. It shows how the "little stone" has grown, and it bears witness how the mustard seed is producing a strong tree; read it for your comfort and for your consolation and faith in your heart that you do not belong to a small, insignificent Church, but that it is growing more rapidly than any other church in the world. In perusing this history remember also that the

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foundation stones of this work remain as solid, and filled with as much stability and strength to-day, as when God placed them as his chief corners to the Church While other Churches meet often to revise their creeds, yet the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ, revealed from God to the farmer's lad, the boy Prophet, has come down through three quarters of a Century filled with as much strength as when first laid in the Church, and appears to our eyes with more lustre and glory as we gather intelligence within ourselves to enable us to appreciate their beauty. The Prophet Joseph said, "Thus Said The Lord," to every fundamental principle God commanded him to place in the Church, and it has not yet been necessary, and never will be, for the councils of the Church to revise the organization that the Father gave to us as His eternal and everlasting plan of salvation. When we consider that Joseph the Prophet, at that period of his life, was an unlearned youth, then it bears witness with stronger force to our souls that an intelligence higher than the intelligence of man, was responsible for the stability of this Gospel, that mobs and other powers of hell have persecuted and driven from place to place, murdering its Prophet and Patriarch, together with many saints who have laid down their lives for the same, in hopes of destroying the work, yet it comes out from every firery furnace with more strength and more lustre and glory at the end of each trial.

The report which I have above referred to gives the following information:

It is only 79 years since the Church was organized with six members at the home of Peter Whitmer, at Fayette. Seneca Co., N. Y. At that time there were only two who held the priesthood, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdrey. Some two months after the organization of the Church a conference was held, at which time a few others received the priesthood and the total membership was increased to 27. On Sept. 26, 1830, the second conference of the Church was held and a membership of 62 was shown; and thus has the Church grown little by little, each conference showing an increase in attendance and membership, until to day, instead of only six members, we have upwards of five hundred thousand, not mentioning the many thousands of faithful Saints who have passed to the great beyond; instead of the priesthood being composed of two men, there are now nearly eighty thousand who hold the priesthood. There are now over sixty stakes of Zion with about 675 wards; there are about two thousand missionaries laboring in the various missions, established in the nations of the earth. Last year these missionaries distributed nearly ten million tracts, 456,645 small books, and 37,112 copies of the standard church works; they held 1,783,939 gospel conversations, and 86 950 meetings. There were nearly 15,000 additions to the church during 1908. In March, 1830, the first edition of the Book of Mormon was published, since which time it has been printed in thirteen different languages and in editions of hundreds of thousands. We now have in the church auxiliary organizations as follows:

The Relief Society with a membership of 31,669; Sunday School with a membership of 165,000; Mutual Improvement Associations with a membership of 57,383, Primary Associations with a membership of 58,856.

When the Church was organized the six members met in a small log cabin, and for a number of years they held their meetings in private dwellings.

In 1836 the first Temple was built in Kirtland, but which was never used fully for the purpose intended, for the reason that the Saints were driven out of the State, the building desecrated and then abandoned by the Prophet Joseph Smith. When they located in Nauvoo they erected another Temple, and since locating in the Rocky Mountains they have erected four magnificent Temples and nearly 700 other beautiful houses of worship at a total cost of nearly eleven million dollars.

In educational facilities, the development of the Church has been equally remarkable. Schools have been taught since the organization of the Church. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the "Glory of God is Intelligence" and also that, "No Man can be Saved in Ignorance." In 1832 a school was organized in Kirtland; at Nauvoo in 1840 a university was given a charter, and public schools were taught. The first school to be taught in Utah, was organized a month or two after the pioneers landed there. In 1851 the University of Deseret was established and is still in operation under the name of the University of Utah. To-day we have 25 church schools established in the various stakes of Zion, built at a cost of $1,225,000; and over $450,000 are spent in the maintenance of these schools every year. In all of these church schools, the higher branches of education are taught. Before the children enter these schools, they attend the regular public schools until they pass the 8th grade. It will be interesting also for the Saints to know that the United States statistics show that only three states in the Union excel Utah in the high standard of education. This alone is sufficient answer to the defamers of truth, when they make the charge that we are an uneducated people.

Now to the saints, let me say God bless you, be filled with joy that you have obeyed the truth, be of good cheer because your Father in Heaven is your friend, and you have the satisfaction of knowing deep down in your hearts that you have obeyed the doctrines of Christ. Now go on to perfection; knowing full well what the end will be, because, just as certain as life itself, so is immortal life in the Celestial Kingdom of our God for all those who love Him and keep His commandments. Jesus Christ the Redeemer of mankind has prepared a place for those who love Him and keep his commandments, and the principles of the Gospel which you have obeyed and which was brought to your doors by a humble Elder in Israel, without purse or scrip, will give unto you an inheritance in that part of God's Kingdom prepared by His Son and will make you joint heirs with Him in our Father's Kingdom if you will remain faithful and true to the end of your mortal days.

God bless you to this end, is the prayer of

Your brother in the Gospel,

Ben. E. Rich